

5. COLOUR ABERRATION IN THE WHITECHEEKED
BULBUL [*PYCNONOTUS LEUCOGENYS LEUCOTIS*
(GOULD)]

During the field work in the Bombay Natural History Society's Bird Migration Study Project on Kuar Bet (Great Rann of Kutch) in March 1960, two aberrant examples of the Whitecheeked Bulbul (*Pycnonotus leucogenys leucotis*) were taken in the nets. Both were young females. The over-all effect of their plumage is a uniform pale sandy, or isabelline. They differ from normal birds—abundant on the island—chiefly in the following particulars: Forehead, crown, nape, and hindneck sandy brown, concolorous with the back; in one the feathers of the crown are edged darker. Chin and throat like head. Ear-coverts silky off-white. Underparts from lower throat to vent paler sandy brown than back. Tail somewhat darker than back, all feathers tipped with whitish and largely cross-rayed.

The skins were sent to Prof. Erwin Stresemann, Berlin, for opinion. He writes:

'Your two curious skins have just arrived. I consider them to be a "pallelogical" aberration of *Pycnonotus l. leucotis*. Both are still in juvenile plumage. They are deficient in black melanins (the so-called "eumelanin") while the brownish melanins ("phaeomelanin") seem rather unchanged, which is also true for the carotenoid colouring of the under tail-coverts. The barring (cross bars) developed not only on the tail feathers but also faintly to be seen on the primaries, may (or may not) indicate that these two specimens suffered periodic starvation in the nestling stage. I know of similar cases in *Acrocephalus*, *Sylvia*, etc. In former days one would have been glad to make these birds types of a brand new species. But, unfortunately, they do *not* deserve such an honour! Nevertheless, they are of considerable interest.'

The arid, semi-desert area of Kutch in western India seems to favour the development of this kind of heterochrosis which Prof. Stresemann calls pallelogical, as well as albinism—total or partial. Instances have been frequently recorded in back numbers of the *Journal*, involving not only birds but also insects and mammals. The aberrant bird species recorded include Bush Quail (*Perdica asiatica* or *P. argoondah?*), Common Babbler (*Turdoides caudatus*), Redvented Bulbul (*Pycnonotus cafer*), Comb Duck (*Sarkidiornis melanotos*), and Great Indian Bustard (*Choriotis nigriceps*).

33, PALI HILL,
BANDRA, BOMBAY 50,
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